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Iraq's Military Capabilities

Iraq's military is much less capable of threatening neighboring states than it was before the Gulf war. Coalition attacks during the war destroyed much of Iraq's ground, air, air defense, and naval forces, and UN sanctions have hampered Iraq's ability to buy replacement equipment. **Despite these setbacks, Iraq is still a potential long-term threat to US interests.** Iraq's military remains one of the largest in the region, and Iraq appears determined to rebuild the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs that were a key part of its bid to gain regional dominance before the war. [REDACTED]

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Iraq's Military Strengths

The Iraqi military lost about half of its combat power at the hands of the coalition during the Gulf war. Nevertheless, Iraq has reorganized its remaining forces into a military structure that retains considerable strengths. For example:

- o The Iraqi military is about the same size as the Egyptian and Syrian militaries and nearly twice that of the combined Gulf Cooperation Council militaries. **Baghdad retains enough military power to overwhelm smaller regional opponents such as Kuwait and could repel any potential regional aggressor.**
- o Iraqi Republican Guard units, which Saddam Husayn is making every effort to keep loyal, surround Baghdad and would be a daunting obstacle to Iraqis who might try to move against the regime.
- o Iraq has at least externally rebuilt many defense plants that were damaged during the Gulf war and has resumed limited weapons development and production. Work on most major conventional weapons systems has been curtailed or delayed, however, pending the lifting of UN sanctions.

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Weaknesses Persist

The weaknesses of the postwar Iraqi military far outweigh its strengths, and Baghdad's military power will decline--or at least not increase--as long as UN sanctions remain in effect. Problems vary from service to service, but in general they include:

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- o **Poor morale and desertions.** Continued insurgent attacks, particularly against Iraqi forces in the south, and poor living conditions have led to a severe desertion problem in many units. In the worst cases, units have reported more than 80 percent of their soldiers missing.
- o **Supply shortages.** UN sanctions have cut off Iraq from its prewar arms suppliers. Baghdad receives a limited amount of parts and equipment despite UN sanctions, but such deliveries probably are insufficient to meet the needs of the military. [REDACTED]
- o **Politicized leadership.** Repeated purges within the military since the war suggest that loyalty to Saddam, rather than military competence, is the yardstick by which senior officers are measured. Such conditions probably have slowed Iraq's attempts to correct serious warfighting deficiencies that were exposed during the Gulf war. [REDACTED]

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WMD Programs Still a Priority

We estimate that Iraq spent billions of dollars on its WMD programs in the 1980s as part of its bid to gain regional dominance, and we see evidence that Saddam Husayn plans to preserve and rebuild these programs. For example:

- o Iraq retains key nonfissile materials and equipment that could be used to reconstitute its nuclear weapons program. Iraq also retains a large technical staff with the documentation and expertise to resume its weapons effort.
- o UN inspectors report that the Iraqis have removed all of the equipment from the one undamaged large-scale production building at the Samarra chemical weapons complex and have never fully accounted for this equipment. Our analysis of Iraq's chemical industry suggests that Baghdad could produce several hundred tons of mustard agent, and, depending on the availability of precursor chemicals, a similar quantity of nerve agent within a year.
- o Iraq has refused to acknowledge that it had an offensive biological warfare program before the Gulf war, and UN inspectors have publicly cited Iraq's failure to account fully for past biological warfare activities. We assess that Iraq retains almost all of its prewar research, development, and production capabilities housed in civilian facilities.
- o [REDACTED] Iraq maintains a residual inventory of prohibited Scud or Scud-type missiles. We judge that Iraq has so far not accounted for perhaps several dozen Scud-type missiles along with a small number of homemade mobile launchers, warheads, support equipment, and propellant. [REDACTED]

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